

Minutes of the Koala Beach Wildlife & Habitat Management Committee Meeting held Wednesday 23 March 2022

Venue: Virtual

Time: 1:00pm

Present: Mayor Chris Cherry (Chair), Cr Meredith Dennis, , Irene Timmins, Rosealie Vallance (Community Representatives), Jane Lofthouse, Scott Benitez Hetherington, Frances Smith-Wright (Minutes) (Tweed Shire Council), Rhonda James (guest).

Apologies: Yvonne Gardiner

Mayor Cherry opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Acknowledgement was also made of the recent flood victims and the flood event in Tweed Shire.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Irene Timmins

Seconded: Rosealie Vallance

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Koala Beach Wildlife & Habitat Management Committee meeting held Wednesday 7 October 2021 as tabled be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Mayor Chris Cherry introduced and welcomed Cr Meredith Dennis to the committee.

Outstanding Actions:

OA.1120-2 – Code of Conduct

As a result of a review by Council the Koala Beach Wildlife and Habitat Management Committee has been categorised as a management committee. There will be a new format for terms of reference. Expressions of Interest for committees will be sent out end of March for a 30 day period. All existing members will be notified.

OA.0221-1 – Gutter cover trials

Gutter covers were successful using rubber skirts. Working group to provide a list of priority sites where they are needed prior to next season

OA.0421-2 – Traffic Calming

Due to staff position not yet being replaced this report will be delayed.

OA.0421-4 – Fence Approval process.

The letter has been drafted with a positive message emphasising the unique features of Koala Beach Estate. The 88b instruments are complex to enforce and would have to be done on an individual property basis as there are variations due to the staged development of the Estate.

Irene suggested working with the Development Compliance Unit of Council and identify potential future compliance actions.

After much discussion it was decided to go forward with an informal education approach using postcards and stimulating community discussion (neighbours educating neighbours). The postcard would be used as a reminder. Dog / Cat exclusion would not be included and kept as a separate postcard drop.

Rosalie suggested that the reminder of fencing standards go into the welcome pack for new arrivals.

Complaints forwarded to Council should be made on an individual basis and followed up if receiving no reply.

OA.0421-5 Site Visit.

This visit is for the committee and will feature the habitat restoration program, nest box program and common blossom bat monitoring and management. Scott has organised for Marama and Deslie to come on 31st March. Scott to confirm time.

A couple of potential committee members/ interested parties are welcome to join the group.

OA.0621-1 Survey Monkey.

Rosalie to register with Survey Monkey for 12 months using levy funds. The Community survey would only be done after the fencing / dog-cat postcards have been distributed. Jane and Rosalie to look at the registration and payment process.

OA.0821-1 Assistance animals

In Progress -this is part of the policy review for the new Council.

OA.1021-3 Cudgera Creek park site inspection.

Two previous attempts rained out. Rhonda noted that the degraded area along the creek was included in the updated Koala Beach Habitat Restoration Plan.

Habitat Restoration Plan presentation

Rhonda James, Bushland Restoration Services, gave a summary of the Koala Beach Restoration Plan, emailed to the committee previously.

The revised edition (August 2021) is more succinct and focussed on the 20 zones of bushland in the Estate.

It was emphasised that the landscaping is on a separate plan and involves just enhancements whereas the Habitat Restoration Plan is focused on plantings and restoration of bushland. Rhonda replied to several questions from the committee:

- Glossy Black-Cockatoos feeding in the trees on the border of the Asset Protection Zone. This has been addressed through additional weed control by bush regeneration contractors and would also be good to identify in the next update of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Plan of Management.
- Weed Management – weed management is variable across the estate and areas as listed in the Plan. Lantana and exotic grasses are predominant and not too difficult to control but succulents as a result of dumping of garden waste is a threat in certain zones. Each year the weed control expands out into these areas affected. Chemicals are used under supervised precision spot spraying.

Blossom Bat monitoring is performed in zone 1 and it has been noted that the mature coast banksias are dying out. They are an important food source for the blossom bat and so trials are being set up to control weeds and to do some supplementary planting.

Scott highlighted an issue to work on in the future – hazard reduction burns incorporated into the restoration works, including the use of fire as a weed management tool. Starting to prioritise zones according to human and environmental assets. Scott confirmed the intent to engage with indigenous land managers, including an emphasis on a mosaic of small burns every winter as an effective way to reduce hazard and also improve vegetation condition.

Scott confirmed that the Asset Protection Zone audit has been completed and all in good order. There were two spots that were not originally designed well that will require the removal of some native trees and shrubs to meet asset protection zone requirements. Further information and notification will be provided to the committee.

Agenda Items:

A1. Social

A1.1 Logo and Signage Project

General discussion was had concerning the entrance signs. Jane to talk to Council signage people to design a robust entry sign. Ideas have been put forward by the working group. The sign does not need to adhere to strict Council style and design guidelines as it is a Koala Beach Estate community sign. It was decided to liaise with sign department first, then complete the design.

A1.2 Communication

Resident survey.

Discussion on using Survey Monkey for the proposed community survey. Rosalie confirmed that questions had been completed. Jane and Rosalie to discuss Survey Monkey registration prior to next meeting.

Postcards

The dog/cat postcards have not been finalised yet. Have to ensure that the position on assistance animals as per the Companion Animals Act is clearly addressed.

Newsletter

Any articles for next newsletter send through to Frances for consideration.

A1.3 Working Group report on progress

Addressed as we went through agenda.

A further print run of 500 Koala Beach brochures will be delivered to Irene.

A2. Environmental

A2.1 Wildlife Surveys

Report distributed to the committee prior to the meeting.

Scott gave a summary of the wildlife survey and monitoring reports and status.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo Management and Monitoring

Low usage of food trees but still more than 2019. They haven't used the nest boxes but are definitely breeding in the area as evidenced by the presence of juvenile birds. Their habitat is stable with 200 feed trees tagged and checked regularly. Citizen science contributions are very important and continue to assist with the monitoring.

Fox monitoring and Control Program.

This includes a 5km buffer around Koala Beach. This comprises of 10 cameras, 5 funded by Koala Beach levy and 5 by Council. Baiting has assisted in reducing the fox population. This has resulted in an increase in the hare population in one location but they do not have the same impact as rabbits. Feral deer have also been spotted on camera.

Blossom Bat Management and Monitoring

Focussing on habitat management with removal of native rainforest pioneer species Banksia seedling trial planting as per the most recent management plan update.

Coastal Planigale Management and Monitoring

Artificial cover object (ACO) monitoring technique has been successful with Planigale utilising 8 of the 11 sites monitored.

Koala Management and Monitoring

Koala Monitoring has been completed. Analysis and mapping will be completed and presented to Councillors at workshop next month.

A3. Economic

A3.1 2021/22 Budget update and finance report

Scott discussed the budget and finance report as distributed to the committee prior to the meeting.

Habitat restoration, wildlife survey/monitoring, pest animal work and reactive maintenance to the proliferation of; bike tracks comprise the bulk of the expenditure to date.

The signage budget allocation has been exceeded due to the cost of installing, replacing and concreting of signs at bike track locations. However, Scott confirmed that there were funds in the reserve fund to complete the estate entry sign.

General Business:

GB1. Dog issues/complaints and follow up actions

Council have requested and received legal advice in relation to the known keeping of dogs on the estate. This advice will be presented to Council as a confidential report and subsequent actions taken accordingly.

Mayor Cherry suggested Council should not approve dog/cat registrations for the Koala Beach estate. Jane to speak to Nick Harrigan to confirm a process to achieve this.

Irene brought to attention that complaints from a resident to Council had not been replied to. Scott suggested that this may be due to Council getting clarity on the matter before getting back to them.

Mayor Cherry suggested that committee members are welcome to address the Council meeting when this is put forward to give a residents view on the issue.

Action 0322-1: Jane to check with ranger staff to determine process for checking addresses for animal registrations at Koala Beach Estate.

GB2. Airbnb impacts and Conservation signage high priority

Due to the increase in Airbnb on the estate and the increase in visitors as a result it was requested that signs be put up at the entrances to inform visitors that they were entering a wildlife area and to be on alert.

As the main entry sign may take considerable time these “you are entering a wildlife area” sign should have priority as they could be organised quickly.

Action 0322-2: Jane to request sign unit to draft a suitable sign based on the example provided (including curlew and koala) and arrange a site visit to confirm appropriate locations on both entry roads.

GB3. DA approvals and secondary dwellings in Koala Beach – assessment of biodiversity impacts.

Irene questioned the development approval process for the estate, as on certain blocks the housing density had increased.

Scott confirmed that the DAs do come through the Sustainability and Environment Unit prior to approval. These applications are assessed against relevant regulations. Koala Beach Estate is well provisioned with 300ha of managed bushland to benefit wildlife.

GB4. Illegal building and use of bike tracks, update.

Council are working with the NSW Police and Nationals Parks and Wildlife to reduce illegal off road motor bike activity. NSW Police have now been equipped with dirt bikes to assist with their on-ground operations. They will also include the push bike tracks on their route to assist with managing these sites. There was one operation in early January but limited activity reported. Several operations are planned for the rest of the year.

Rosalie suggested using funds to present a KB environmental education package at Pottsville and surrounding schools to show the uniqueness of Koala Beach.

Discussion was had regarding painting a mural on the bridge at the entry to the estate. The committee could use this exercise as a community development opportunity for school children. This would need to be approved by the public art reference group and have the support of the local residents.

Action 0322-3: Scott to assist Rosalie develop a proposal by discussing previous similar programs implemented by council.

GB5. Request for fencing and buffer planting of lomandras in sensitive environmental areas.

Irene suggested dense plantings of Lomandra to protect sensitive areas and where bike tracks are developing. Scott also suggested native raspberry and cockspur thorn as they can also provide a barrier difficult to get through. It was noted that these species may not be a naturally occurring species of the ecosystem we are trying to protect and so may only be able to be used where there is suitable other open space e.g. parkland. A strategy for consideration as longer term management actions are implemented at these sites.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.30 pm.

Next Meeting: TBA

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM’S COMMENTS:

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

Minutes

Meeting date	No.	Action	Status
4 Nov 2020	1120-2	<i>Senior Program Leader Biodiversity to arrange for a 'Code of Conduct for Council Committee Members, Delegates of Council and Council Advisors' briefing at the next Committee meeting.</i>	Deferred to new committee.
4 Nov 2020	1120-7	<i>Development of an integrated communication strategy to include estate entry and traffic warning signs to be included in next 2021/22 budget and to be included as an Agenda item for next meeting.</i>	JL to organise meeting with Communications & Engagement Unit- complete Maintain on agenda
4 Nov 2020	1120-8	<i>Committee members encouraged to form a working group to meet outside of the committee meetings to develop ideas for the communications strategy. Responsibility: Committee.</i>	Ongoing
3 Feb 2021	0221-1	<i>JL to check and provide feedback on gutter cover trials.</i>	Trial successful even with recent heavy rain. Will be expanded next year.
7 April	0421-2	<i>Jane to report on status of traffic calming investigations and forward Irene's email with hotspot map to relevant staff.</i>	Ongoing – report due Oct/Nov (delayed due to staff leaving) Irene's report provided to road safety officer.
7 April	0421-4	<i>Jane to report back on fence approval process (is development consent required) and compliance process.</i>	Working group to encourage reporting of non-compliant fences to determine extent of issue. •Letter drafted •Complex to enforce (a lot of variation in s88B instruments, 500 to review and collate) and no resources made available • collating information on historical efforts to address this. •Will prepare postcard style 'reminder notice' for distribution to all houses in the estate and use in the new resident welcome pack
7 April	0421-5	<i>Scott to arrange a site visit (2 hours) for the committee to feature the habitat restoration program, nest box program and common blossom bat monitoring and management.</i>	31 March 2022. 8.30am. All participants notified.
2 June	0621-1	<i>Jane to organise a meeting with comms and Rosealie to discuss Survey Monkey.</i>	Complete - Ok to go with 1 year subscription
4 August	0821-1	<i>Jane and Scott to seek clarification on Council's position on assistance animals in public areas including sensitive locations and whether a policy should be developed.</i>	In progress – best addressed in the review of Companion Animals Policy
4 August	0821-2	<i>Working group to walk around site and consider areas for different types of signage placement.</i>	In progress
4 August	0821-3	<i>Scott and Jane to draft letter re: fencing regulations for Koala Beach residents.</i>	Complete - Letter drafted – see action 0421-4 above for current status
4 August	0821-4	<i>Council to assist with design of folder for Welcome pack.</i>	No further progress
4 August	0821-5	<i>Scott to provide further information about tree replacement procedures in Koala Beach estate.</i>	Update at next meeting

Minutes

7 October	1021-1	<i>Jane to present Entrance design and construction ideas to sign writers.</i>	No update – actions identified and agreed
7 October	1021-2	<i>Jane to order more Koala Beach Estate brochures</i>	Complete – delivered to Irene
7 October	1021-3	<i>Scott to ask Tanya to visit Creek site and put together an enhancement plan suggesting new plantings that can be done.</i>	In progress, Scott to re-schedule. Rhonda noted this site is included in the updated restoration plan.
23 March	0322-1	<i>Jane to check with ranger staff to determine process for checking addresses for animal registrations at Koala Beach Estate.</i>	
23 March	0322-2	<i>Jane to request sign unit to draft a suitable sign based on the example provided (including curlew and koala) and arrange a site visit to confirm appropriate locations on both entry roads.</i>	
23 March	0322-3	<i>Scott to assist Rosalie develop a proposal by discussing previous similar programs implemented by council.</i>	